

VZCZCXYZ0002  
RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHIN #3536/01 2890906  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
R 160906Z OCT 06  
FM AIT TAIPEI  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 2600  
INFO RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 5775  
RUEHHK/AMCONSUL HONG KONG 6990

UNCLAS AIT TAIPEI 003536

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR INR/R/MR, EAP/TC, EAP/PA, EAP/PD - DAVID FIRESTEIN  
DEPARTMENT PASS AIT/WASHINGTON

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [KPAO](#) [TW](#)

SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: DPRK NUCLEAR TEST, U.S.-TAIWAN RELATIONS

11. Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies focused their coverage October 14-16 on President Chen Shui-bian's call to consider writing a constitution for a "Second Republic" Sunday; and on the UN Security Council's decision to impose sanctions on North Korea. News also focused on President Chen Shui-bian's survival of a second presidential recall vote last Friday; on a meeting between KMT Chairman Ma Ying-jeou and People First Party Chairman James Soong Sunday on the feasibility of a no-confidence vote on Premier Su Tseng-chang and a third recall motion against President Chen; and on the year-end Taipei and Kaohsiung mayoral races. The pro-independence "Liberty Times," Taiwan's largest-circulation daily, ran a banner headline on page two that read "Bian: Institute Constitution for 'Second Republic,'" while the pro-unification "United Daily News" front-paged a banner headline that said "Bian Tosses Off Second Republic Constitution."

In addition, several papers continued over the weekend to cover on inside pages the U.S. Congressional Research Service (CRS) report released last Tuesday. These news reports focused on the DPP government's suspicion of TECRO representatives in Washington, as analyzed in the CRS report, and said Washington is concerned that the Taiwan leadership is more inclined "to put personal political interests ahead of more strategic objectives and U.S. concerns."

12. In terms of editorials and commentaries, an opinion piece in the "United Daily News" said Pyongyang's recent nuclear test will serve as an important indicator of the rise and fall of U.S. and Chinese forces in East Asia. An editorial in the limited-circulation, conservative, pro-unification, English-language "China Post" said Kim Jong-il has acted as if North Korea "is a real tiger with nuclear teeth" and "in the end, the world probably must bite the bullet and recognize the fait accompli that is the result of the collective blunders made the major players who had either miscalculated or underestimated North Korea." An opinion piece in the pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" urged the United States to make a comprehensive evaluation of the current situation in East Asia, while a separate "Taipei Times" opinion piece said the nuclear test "has thoroughly proven the ineffectiveness of Beijing's effort to be a leader in international policy, and destroyed any credibility it had as a reliable mediator." With regard to U.S.-Taiwan relations, columnist Antonio Chiang commented on the CRS report and said President Chen's credibility problem has done severe harm to Taipei-Washington ties. An editorial in the limited-circulation, pro-independence, English-language "Taiwan News," on the other hand, said it is apparent that Washington was "overly tilting toward Beijing ... for the sake of fostering China as a 'responsible stakeholder' in the international community." End summary.

13. DPRK Nuclear Test

A) "North Korea's Nuclear Test [Results in] Declining Chinese Force, Rising U.S. Force"

Chen Hsin-chih, associate professor of political science at National Cheng Kung University, opined in the pro-unification "United Daily News" [circulation: 400,000] (10/15):

"On the surface, it seems as if the United States has softened its punitive measures against North Korea at Beijing's insistence. But Beijing's support for, and participation in, the [UN] resolution to impose sanctions on North Korea also indicates that the era in which Beijing and Washington worked together to divide their territories of power on the Korean Peninsula by the 38th parallel has come to an end. North Korea has always been classified as being within China's territory of power, and since the Korean War in 1950 Beijing has been the long-time protector of North Korea's safety and its biggest supporting partner when it comes to economic and trade exchanges with North Korea. But Pyongyang's test-firing of ballistic missiles on July 5 and its recent nuclear test both indicated that North Korea no longer trusts Beijing to provide the necessary safety umbrella to protect North Korea. Pyongyang, as a result, has switched to developing its nuclear deterrent force as the key tool to maintain Kim Jong-il's regime. North Korea's repeated challenges to the international community have all the more highlighted Beijing's declining influence on Pyongyang.

"Beijing has failed to restrain North Korea's behavior in recent years, and it has failed to resolve Washington's negative impression on North Korea. Beijing has also been in great straits when it comes to maintaining the security status quo on the Korean Peninsula. By contrast, Washington's tough attitude toward Pyongyang, which has more than once spurred North Korea to adopt extreme practices in order to maintain the Kim Jong-il regime, has rapidly weakened China's prestige with and influence on North Korea. As a result, Beijing is forced to work with the United States to abandon ... its original unilateral strategy to restrain North Korea, and to deal with the North Korean nuclear issue by using the negotiation methods normally adopted by big countries, in an attempt to meet the common interests of Beijing and Washington. ...

"For the future, developments on the Korean Peninsula will serve as a touchstone for China and the United States in dealing with regional security issues in East Asia, using the negotiation methods adopted by big countries. It will also become an important indicator of the rise and fall of U.S. and Chinese forces in East Asia."

B) "Who Is the Paper Tiger?"

The conservative, pro-unification, English-language "China Post" [circulation: 30,000] editorialized (10/14):

"... Although labeled by George W. Bush as a rogue state and member of the axis of evil, North Korea is gutsy enough to play the game of chicken with the world's sole superpower. ... You may call North Korea a 'paper tiger' if you like, but it is scary enough to unnerve its neighbors, even the United States, which is the real tiger. Kim was able to embarrass Bush by calling his bluff. The American president now looks at the end of his rope on how he could respond to Kim's provocation. More than that, Kim was also able to expose to the whole world the hypocrisy of Bush, who invaded Iraq three years ago under the pretext that Saddam Hussein possessed 'weapons of mass destruction.' But no traces of WMDs have ever been found since the oil-rich country was 'liberated' by the U.S.-led forces.

"Kim has told Bush all along that he has nuclear weapons, and long-range missiles, too. Now, Kim has detonated one for the world to see. Bush is watching this proliferation of WMD with folded hands. Why the double standard? Why was a sin for Saddam to own something he did not have, while it is OK for Kim to test the WMD in the face of the world? Is it because North Korea does not have oil? Equally embarrassed is mainland China, which has put its credibility on the line by assuring the world that the best way to resolve the nuclear crisis was through quiet diplomacy. Now the Frankenstein's monster created by Beijing has not responded to Beijing's entreaties and pressure, and gave Beijing a slap in the face. Now the world is watching how Beijing will clean up the mess created by itself. Beijing, after all, is the only country that wields real influence on Pyongyang, because it is the provider of food, fuel, and financial support for North Korea. ...

"But Kim has acted as if the North is a real tiger with nuclear teeth. He stands tall despite his diminutive stature, knowing that the collapse of his regime would be a nightmare for its neighbors, mostly mainland China, South Korea, and Russia who fear for the millions of North Korean refugees fleeing the slave land. ... In the end, the world probably must bite the bullet and recognize the fait accompli that is the result of the collective blunders made the major players who had either miscalculated or underestimated North Korea. With or without sanctions, Pyongyang will not vanish from the earth any time soon. A nuclear-free Korea peninsula will become more difficult to achieve, now that the Pandora box is opened."

C) "China Behind North Korea, the 'Reds'"

Paul Lin, a political commentator based in Taipei, opined in the pro-independence "Taipei Times" [circulation: 30,000] (10/16):

"... China colluded with North Korea in the six-party talks to lie to the US and the international community just to buy time to increase Pyongyang's military prowess. And Beijing also allowed the North Koreans to move their center for money laundering to Zhuhai, China, after shutting down the Macau operation, and last November, Hu visited North Korea to give a gift of US\$2 billion. ... The nuclear test is a direct threat to the peace of East Asia, and so the defenses of South Korea, Japan and Taiwan must all be strengthened. The test is also sure to encourage Iran's arrogance and increase tensions in the Middle East. ...

"Beijing is behind North Korea just as it is behind this new 'red army' in Taipei. We shall see if China is willing to punish North Korea. ... The US must make a comprehensive evaluation of the current situation in East Asia. Besides preparing military options, it must also have political solutions. The US can no longer be lenient with China, the source of the problem."

D) "North Korean Test Exposes Regional Fault Lines"

Parris Chang, former deputy secretary-general of the National Security Council, opined in the pro-independence "Taipei Times" [circulation: 30,000] (10/15):

"... North Korea's nuclear test is a serious blow to international stability in East Asia, and proves that China and the US' efforts to prevent North Korea from joining the nuclear club have been massive failures. The international community originally had high hopes that the six-party talks would persuade North Korea to give up its nuclear aspirations. However, its test has thoroughly proven the ineffectiveness of Beijing's effort to be a leader in international policy, and destroyed and credibility it had as a reliable mediator. ...

"The US' top concern, on the other hand, is that North Korea could develop the ability to attack the US with nuclear weapons and long-range missiles. This week's test proves that the 'no war, but no peace either' tactic Bush has adopted over the past six years has been a complete failure. Furthermore, the Bush administration's reliance on China to act as moderator for the six-party talks has been a colossal strategic failure. It is therefore time for a policy reassessment. ...

"North Korea's policy of brinkmanship has forced Japan to once again consider amending its pacifist constitution and build up its military. It also has to decide whether or not it wants to develop its own nuclear weapons. North Korea has strengthened Abe's position. He has long held that Japan should amend its 1947 Constitution so that military forces can fight alongside allies overseas. The draft of the revised Constitution will maintain Japan's commitment to peace, but it will also allow for Japan to quicken its military buildup and become a normal country."

14. U.S.-Taiwan Relations

A) "A-Bian Does Severe Harm to Taiwan-U.S. Relations"

Columnist Antonio Chiang commented in the mass-circulation "Apple Daily" [circulation: 500,000] (10/16):

"A-Bian's credibility problem is his Achilles heel. If society can trust his personality, corruption will not be the target of the 'Oust Bian' campaign. When it comes to Taipei-Washington ties, Bian's personal credibility problem has not only hurt himself but also done damage to Taiwan's interests as a whole. The U.S. Congressional Research Service has no substantive political influence, but its severe criticism of A-Bian himself did reflect mainstream opinion in Washington D.C. Over the past six years, since A-Bian came to power, Washington's patience and goodwill toward the Taiwan authorities have been eroded to nearly nothing. No matter whether it's the White House, the National Security Council, the State Department, or the think tanks, their bad opinion of A-Bian has not only been increasing but also almost undivided.

...

"For A-Bian, this way [i.e., flip-flopping] is the only way to survive in the perilous waters of politics, and this is his survival strategy. But having passed one trial after another, he has destroyed practically every bridge after he passed the trial. Now almost all the bridges of Taipei-Washington relations have been totally destroyed by him."

#### B) "Mutual Respect Key to U.S.-Taiwan Ties"

The pro-independence, English-language "Taiwan News" [circulation: 20,000] editorialized (10/16):

"Maintenance of healthy and constructive relations between Taiwan and the United States has undeniably become more difficult in the face of factors such as China's increasing influence on global affairs, Washington's 'war on terror,' contending crises in the Middle East, the North Korean nuclear crisis, and domestic changes in both Taiwan and the U.S. A newly released report by an analyst with the U.S. Congressional Research Service called 'Taiwan-U.S. Political Relations: New Changes and Strains' pointed to both structural and political constraints that have complicated ties between the right-wing Republican administration of U.S. President George W. Bush and the Democratic Progressive Party<sup>6</sup> administration under President Chen Shui-bian in Taiwan. ...

"We have repeatedly urged the Bush administration to keep in mind the importance of striking a balance between its engagement with the authoritarian Chinese Communist Party-ruled People's Republic of China and Washington's long-time support of Taiwan's democracy. Washington's anxiety about cross-strait tension comes largely from the perception that Beijing will make a 'dangerous, objectionable, and foolish response' to Taiwan's continued affirmation of its sovereignty and independence. Since the Beijing regime is even less predictable than democratic Taiwan, it has been easier for Washington to attempt to constrain Taipei first or even treat the Taiwan leader as a 'trouble-maker' than to address the structural problems that cause these tensions.

"President Chen's leadership style may indeed constitute an element in past flaps in the Taipei-Washington relationship, but unilaterally putting all the blame on Chen's personal style or alleged political motives is unfair to Taiwan's

democratically-elected national leader and shows a myopic refusal to acknowledge fundamental changes in the nature of cross-strait relations. ... While the Bush administration keeps pressuring President Chen and the DPP to avoid rocking the boat by pursuing any possible means of so-called 'formal independence,' it should also have introduced concrete measures to constrain Beijing's incessant deployment of more and more missiles targeted at Taiwan and its diplomatic saber from rattling against Taipei's international space.

We believe the Bush administration did make efforts to persuade Beijing leaders to engage in direct dialogue with Taiwan's duly-elected president and government and to refrain from misguided and belligerent moves to threaten Taiwan's democracy. However, it is also apparent that Washington has overly tilting toward Beijing, despite the lack of a 'goodwill' response to the above initiatives, for the sake of fostering China as a 'responsible stakeholder' in the international community. ..."